

Natural Resource Inventory
Work Session - February 19, 2020
Draft Minutes

Present: Jay Diener, HCC member
Deb Wrobel – HCC Alternate
Rayann Dionne – Conservation Coordinator
Amanda Stone – UNH Cooperative Extension

Work Session: Town Manager’s Meeting Room – 3:00 to 5:00 pm

Amanda Stone explained the difference between the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) and Natural Resource Chapter as it can be confusing. The NRI can be a longer document that is often used to develop a Master Plan Natural Resource Chapter. The current Natural Resource chapter is good and can be used as a stepping stone for creating the NRI. Ms. Julie LaBranche with the Rockingham Planning Commission was the author of the NRI. Mrs. Stone has the original chapter as a word document that she can share with the Commission

Mrs. Wrobel asked where the NRI lives. Mrs. Stone replied that it is held by the Conservation Commission as a primary working document. This document helps to guide land protection actions by the Commission. She recommended looping in other boards and encouraging them to use it, many other communities place a copy at the library.

Mrs. Stone said that it is critical that the NRI and Natural Resource Chapter be synched together

Mrs. Stone liked the idea which was brought up in the first meeting to have a NRI summary (2 pages) for different audiences like the public, planning, and BOS.

Mrs. Stone shared that Hampton should reference and include where appropriate the NH Coastal Conversation Plan and updated Wildlife Action Plan (maps) as they are great resources when creating the NRI. She also noted that Fish and Game is also a great resource.

Mrs. Stone recommended weaving a climate change thread change throughout the inventory because it highlights the values of those resources, it’s better than having one section on it. This is a good opportunity to add it, however, she did not have any current examples to share.

Mr. Diener asked to what extent have other communities addressed climate change and sea-level rises in their NRI. Mrs. Stone replied that no one has done it yet.

Mrs. Stone said talking about sea-level rise and climate change helps to make a case for protecting natural resources as they help with dealing with storage and filtering. Each natural resource has a connection such as groundwater, surface water, and marsh migration. It helps people see that climate change is not a separate piece, it's a part of everything. She also recommended talking about buffers more, as they themselves are not a natural resource. However, they are part of the network. Add discussion of buffers to each of the wetland or water resource sections.

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Work Session - February 19, 2020
Draft Minutes

Mrs. Stone also recommended highlighting coastal resources such as beaches, dunes, and saltmarshes. Salt Marshes could also be discussed in the wetland section. Each time we cross-reference it helps to reiterate/highlight the importance of that particular natural resource, it's a network of resources, not just an individual resources.

Mrs. Stone shared that the Town of Bath NH did their inventory in 2012 and updated it in 2015/2016. In the update, they wanted a wildlife focus, so they took this specific topic and wove it through the whole document.

Mrs. Stone transitioned to some of the initial steps Hampton can take to develop an NRI. She recommended looking at the Natural Resource Chapter's table of contents. This provides a good outline to work from and it can be edited to show the things you want to include and those you don't. Develop a framework, by looking at what others have done and identify what we want to include. Mrs. Stone would also send out a NRI outline example.

Having a comprehensive outline is important when you are working with a consultant. It helps them understand exactly what you are looking for. That's why a framework is important to provide.

There was a brief discussion about how to fund NRI development and updates. Mrs. Stone shared that some Towns look for joint funding with the Planning Board while others use the Conservation fund.

Mr., Diener questioned whether the Conservation Fund is appropriate. Mrs. Stone replied, yes because it can be used for conservation-related activities. The NRI is the backbone of this conservation land work. The development of an NRI informs and leads to land acquisition. She did caution that you should read how the fund was developed in your Town warrant, just in case there are limitations. She added that the cost of an NRI can range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 depending on the level of information such as including build-outs or co-concurrence mapping. It can be anywhere from 5K to 15K. She also noted that using co-concurrence maps can be a bit challenging because it's an interpretive map, and some natural resources can be overlooked if they only have a single important attribute.

Mr., Diener asked whether it makes sense to use the same consultant that is doing Master Plan work to also do the Natural Resource Chapter update and NRI. Mrs. Stone responded that it might be beneficial to have the consultant write the NRI and then do the Master Plan Natural Resource updated. The NRI should be written first.

Mrs. Stone shared that they do have a list of consultants that Hampton could consider.

Mr. Diener asked other than regional planning commissions, are there independent consulting or firms. Mrs. Stone replied that they had a list of about 10 consultants, all of which do a very good job.

Natural Resource Inventory
Work Session - February 19, 2020
Draft Minutes

Mrs. Stone shared that she worked with the Town of Pembroke several years ago and she has their Request for Proposals for drafting an NRI that she can share. It can take 6-8 months for most consultants to complete the NRI. Probably one year from start to finish

She also recommended taking a look at the Taking action for wildlife website which holds most of the natural resource inventory info there, along with an outline for an NRI. She further noted that in the last 10 years, there is a lot more information available that can be included such as the Tides to Storm, Coastal Conservation Plan, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) recently developed Connect the Coast which highlight linkages for wildlife corridors. There is a workshop being planned this spring for the Connect the Coast information.

Mrs. Dionne asked if there was a GIS layer for Connect the Coast. Mrs. Stone replied, yes but she will verify if it's on UNH Granit.

Mrs. Stone noted that the upcoming Coastal Hazards Master Plan chapter for Hampton could also reference in the NRI. Important to have the two documents talking to each other.

Mrs. Stone recommended going through all of the Natural Resource Chapter recommendations and identifying which ones have been done and consider removing those that might not be as relevant anymore.

Mrs. Wrobel asked if recommendation should be embedded in the NRI or just the Natural Resource Chapter. Mrs. Stone replied yes, recommendations should be in both documents. The recommendations in the NRI would be actions that you take to achieve greater protection. The NRI would be the basis for an action plan. What can be done in the short, medium, and long term? The action plan can be part of the NRI or stand-alone. 2-page summary for how to use it by different groups. The action plan outlines different action items including who would be involved, implementation level – easy, medium, hard, basic cost range, and time frame. It is important to understand that this document is never done, you can update the inventory at any point. If you keep the document up to date over time (every couple of years), then it won't end up being old. Create an action check-off list, so you can see your progress.

Mr. Diener asked if there were grant funds available. Mrs. Stone said it's hard to find grant funds these days, but on the coast, you could consider looking at Piscataqua Region Estuary Partnership (PREP), because at one time they were funding NRIs, not sure if they will be for the upcoming funding. Could check with the NHDES Coastal Program especially if climate is a thread.

Mrs. Stone noted that GIS mapping should be included in the inventory. It is helpful if you also retain poster-size maps. The posters are easy to review with groups when identifying priorities and time frames, and great to have for public outreach events. Laminating the maps is also very helpful. People love maps, where's my house and what's near it. This generates conversation, provides a bird's eye view of the town and how things relate to one another.

Natural Resource Inventory
Work Session - February 19, 2020
Draft Minutes

There was a brief conversation about the UNH Granit conservation and public land inventory and the challenges of providing updates to that layer. Mrs. Stone recommended contacting the Rockingham Planning Commission and or TNC to see if they help with updates. Mrs. Dionne shared that this might be a good task for the Commission's summer intern.

Outline of Next steps

1. Take the Resource Chapter Table of Contents – use it as an outline and edit
 - Weave in climate thread across all of the natural resources
 - Add Buffers discussion to each resource where they apply
2. Compile all of the existing recommendations to see what has been completed and outdated – see Appendix A – Implementation Plan for recommendations – similar to an action plan.

Mrs. Wrobel asked if this would be an iterative process, imagine that as we get new information, that the recommendations would be reshaped. Mrs. Stone replied that the first step is to create the inventory, then review drafts and provide input to the Consultant. The Consultant will be developing new recommendations that would be reviewed by the Commission, a collaborative process. It's a two-way process.